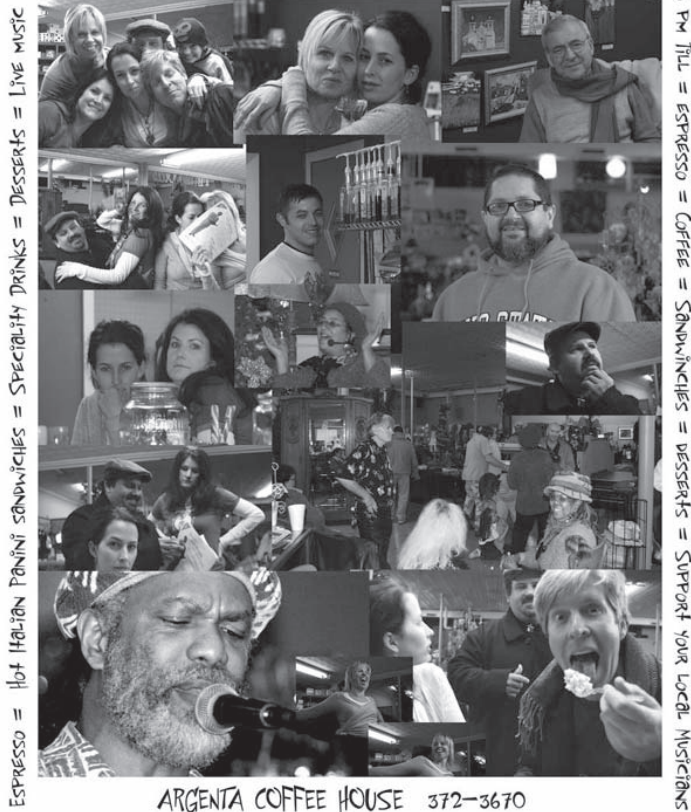


ARGENTA COFFEE HOUSE = INSIDE GALAXY FURNITURE = LIVE MUSIC EVERY FRIDAY



ESPRESSO = HOT HAWAIIAN PANINI SANDWICHES = SPECIALTY DRINKS = DESSERTS = LIVE MUSIC

6 PM TILL = ESPRESSO = COFFEE = SANDWICHES = DESSERTS = SUPPORT YOUR LOCAL MUSICIANS

ARGENTA COFFEE HOUSE 372-3670

Grounds for Optimism in Argenta

North Little Rock's newest buzz percolates on Main Street



for Warlick to use as a studio. While she originally wanted to open an art gallery for up-and-coming artists, that plan changed when the now-defunct Oval Art Gallery accepted her work.

Galaxy Furniture owner Wayne Hogan caught wind that Warlick wanted to open an espresso bar, and talked her into using a booth in his store to do it. After five months, she started hosting live music and outgrew that spot. Warlick moved in March to her current location, which happens to be the exact spot she sublet to work on her paintings in 2003.

Warlick used money

made from her jewelry and art to pay for the storefront, and proudly notes she has been in the black financially since opening. Though she occasionally dabbles in architectural work, she can afford to be selective about the projects.

Award-Winning Java

Warlick recently learned the *Arkansas Times* will give its Editor's Choice award to Argenta Coffee Co. for Best Coffee Shop. She claims the award amounts to more than a popularity contest decided by readers.

While patrons can order the usual coffee shop fare – lattes, mochas, cappuccinos, espressos, iced and frozen coffees or just the basic black – a lunch menu promises paninis, quesadillas, grilled wraps, vegetarian offerings and sandwiches named after friends and regulars, e.g. Ed's 7th Heaven pays tribute to Haddock and Brian's Brickhouse honors regular Brian Converse, whose wireless Internet access allows patrons to browse the Web.

By August, Warlick plans to open a new dessert bar, with homemade desserts that compliment wine. Expansion plans include additional seating, larger space for Salsa dancing (and possibly Brazilian Capoeira dance lessons), and a back patio for jazz, blues and bigger bands, that will be available for private parties featuring a graffiti wall by local artists and beds of organic vegetables and sunflowers. Long-term plans include opening a drive-through kiosk for business people in the morning.

"Before this place was open, you couldn't find a good cup of coffee in downtown North Little Rock," Haddock says. "I don't think it's the coffee necessarily, it's the whole atmosphere. Everybody knows your name. It's a coffee shop that's the heartbeat of who lives here, that supports the local artists."

Artistic Stomping Grounds

Black and white photography of Jacksonville native Edward Haddock greets customers on the right when entering the grounds, while the left wall features oil on canvas paintings from Bigelow, Ark., the Southwest and Krakow, Poland, home of painter Ludwik Koszowski. A painted door features Warlick's depiction of a female body and a case houses her original jewelry.

Traveling artists put out a tip jar and start playing with Warlick's blessing. She lets artists she meets at the River Market put on sidewalk shows. Warlick refuses to charge a commission for artists, which may account for the waiting list for art shows and performances.

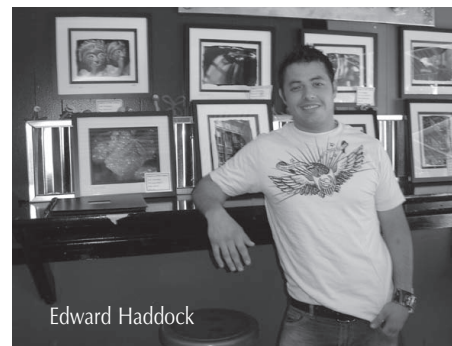
Other ventures start over a cup of coffee. Working with Haddock, Erin Simpson and Amber Brewer, Warlick recently finished a children's book and is helping illustrate others. She prefers hiring single parents, then letting them bring their kids to work, exposing a new generation to culture seldom seen on a computer screen.

"With live music and live shows, it becomes a culture as diverse as possible," says Haddock, who often helps when the lounge fills up. "I volunteer with Big Brother and I brought my little brother down here because I want him to be exposed to this to become culturally aware."

Perks of the Job

Warlick moved to the area in 1999 from Wichita Falls, Texas, obtained her interior design degree in Conway, then worked a few years drafting architectural floor plans for the hospitality and restaurant industries. Yet the grind left little time for art.

"I tapped into the art community and decided I wanted to focus on that and sink my energy and time into it," she says. "I'd have the income and figure out what Little Rock had to offer in the art world and it really impresses me. I'll



Edward Haddock

probably never leave, though I may live between here and overseas."

Warlick started designing jewelry in 1998, and now sells to six stores in Italy. She designs two lines a year for spring/summer and fall/winter. She sold jewelry at the River Market for a couple of months upon arriving in Little Rock. Although Warlick started a clothing line last year, her fashion show debuted the week she opened Argenta Coffee Co. It turned out to be too much.

"It was a lot of fun, but it had to go off the plate," she says.

Warlick started frequenting the Argenta Historical District in 2003 to meet a client, who sublet storage space

by Ron Sitton

Argenta Coffee Co. hides behind a purple facade and a street lamp next to Cornerstone Grill & Pub at 318 Main St. A tent-shaped billboard on the sidewalk promotes upcoming events, while pink construction paper posters promising \$5 Salsa lessons frame the storefront window. Occasionally, belly dancers, performers and visual artists spill onto the sidewalk, beckoning those looking for more than the average cup of Joe.

"At first people were afraid to get off the trolleys, now they're parking," owner Jeri Warlick says, noting the Argenta Historical District is garnering comparisons to New York's Greenwich Village and San Francisco. "People are interested in coming to see what we're doing. We're going to give the other side of the river a run for its money."

With the recent approval to serve beer and wine, Warlick needs more room for the Salsa lessons, which caused her to turn people away Thursday night after 40 crammed inside to learn new moves. Yet coffee and dancing only provide part of the allure.

"We're doing something here," Warlick says. "This is not just a coffee shop. This is a melting pot for art, culture, life."

